



Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations

2014 State Legislative Accomplishments

January – July 2014

Legislation Signed into Law

An Act Promoting Economic Growth Across the Commonwealth (*Chapter 287 of the Acts of 2014*)

- For the first time since 1906, the City of Boston will be able to **appoint its own liquor licensing board** (transferred from the Governor to the Mayor), a provision already afforded to every other municipality.
- The City of Boston was also granted 25 additional liquor licenses per year for 3 years, for a total of **75 new liquor licenses**. These include:
 - 5 all alcohol licenses a year (total of 15) that are not geographically restricted within the City and can be transferred by the owner.
 - 15 all alcohol licenses a year (total of 45) and 5 malt and wine licenses a year (total of 15) that are restricted to Main Street Districts and the neighborhoods of Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Mission Hill, and Roxbury. These are non-transferable.
- The successful Infrastructure Investment Incentive (**I-Cubed**) Program was expanded. The total bond authorizations for the program increased from \$325 million to \$600 million and the cap on the number of I-Cubed projects any one municipality can undertake increased from 3 to 8. In 2012, this project cap was lifted from 2 to 3 but by 2014, the City of Boston had already reached its 3 project maximum.
- \$2.5 million was appropriated to recapitalize the **Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund**. Since its inception in 2006, the WCTF has developed 46 regional training partnerships with public and non-profit organizations including the Boston Housing Authority, Action for Boston Community Development, Jewish Vocational Services, Year Up and more. Despite not having a permanent funding source, this appropriation will ensure that these training programs can continue.

An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence (*Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014*)

This is the first comprehensive update to Massachusetts' gun laws since 1994, which:

- Brings Massachusetts into **compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)**. NICS was created in 1999 but over the last 15 years, Massachusetts has only submitted *one* mental health record into the system, creating a significant loophole that would allow a prohibited purchaser to obtain a gun. Massachusetts courts will now send all relevant mental health records to NICS meaning that, for the first time, the Commonwealth will truly have comprehensive background checks.
- Allows local chiefs of police the opportunity to file a petition with the District Court if they believe an individual is unsuitable to receive a **Firearm Identification (FID) Card**. Previously, Police Chiefs were required by law to issue an FID card to any individual who passed a background check, even if they had additional information that would lead them to believe the person was a threat to public safety.
- Centralizes data collection and the reporting of crime gun statistics and includes several provisions to promote school safety and suicide prevention.

An Act to Increase Opportunities for Long-Term Substance Abuse Recovery (*Chapter 258 of the Acts of 2014*). The Legislature took a comprehensive look at our existing substance abuse recovery system and made significant changes to reduce barriers currently facing patients and their families. These changes include requiring all insurers to reimburse for substance abuse treatment services delivered by Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors, a stand-alone bill originally filed by Mayor Walsh. The final legislation also requires MassHealth to cover the cost of detox (Acute Treatment Services) and up to 14 days of step-down detox (Clinical Stabilization Services) and requires commercial insurers and the Group Insurance Commission to cover up to 14 days of detox and step-down detox, all without prior authorization.

An Act Establishing the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights (*Chapter 148 of the Acts of 2014*). Mayor Walsh co-sponsored this legislation as a Representative. This law amends state labor laws to guarantee basic working standards and protections for our domestic workers. The Mayor attended and spoke at the bill signing on July 2, 2014.

An Act Restoring the Minimum Wage and Providing Unemployment Insurance Reforms (*Chapter 144 of the Acts of 2014*) increases the state's minimum wage in three annual steps. By 2017, Massachusetts will have the highest minimum wage in the country at \$11/hour. Additionally, workers in tipped industries will receive their first raise since 1999, seeing an increase from \$2.63 to \$3.75/hour. The bill also includes unemployment insurance reforms and extends Occupational Safety and Health Administration-like protections to public employees, both of which the Mayor sponsored as a Representative.

An Act Relative to the Expansion of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (*Chapter 195 of the Acts of 2014*). Since 2004, the two convention centers in Boston have generated more than \$5.3 billion in economic impact, \$260 million in revenue, and supported more than 5,000 jobs. This law allows the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center in South Boston to expand and capitalize off of the strong performance and growth of the tourism and business sectors. Mayor Walsh has actively supported this expansion as an opportunity to generate a significant economic return on the Commonwealth's investment for the Greater Boston area and the entire state.

An Act Relative to the Preparation of Certain Bilingual Ballots in the City of Boston (*Chapter 166 of the Acts of 2014*) allows the City of Boston to offer ballots transliterated in Chinese and translated in Vietnamese for state and federal elections, which will increase voter participation in these communities and reaffirm their faith in the integrity of the democratic process.

An Act Relative to the Powers of the Boston Fair Housing Commission (*Chapter 110 of the Acts of 2014*) adds "gender identity" as a protected class in housing cases which the Boston Fair Housing Commission has the authority to enforce, and clarifies that no dwelling owner can publish discriminatory ads or make discriminatory statements when selling or renting units of housing.

The Owen Nawn Factory & Parcel 8 Land Transfers, Roxbury (*Chapter 281 of the Acts of 2014*) authorizes the transfer of Parcel 8 (Melnea Cass Boulevard) and half of the Owen Nawn Factory (Washington Street) in Roxbury from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to the City of Boston. These transfers require the state to undertake and fund the archaeological surveys needed on site and require the City to maintain preservation and conservation restrictions to protect the rich history and integrity of both parcels.

An Act Relative to Organ Retention (*Chapter 267 of the Acts of 2014*) was originally filed by Mayor Walsh as a Representative in memory of David F. Macrelli. This law requires that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner obtain consent from the deceased's next of kin if the Office wishes to retain any whole body part or organ for any purpose other than determining the cause of death. The Medical Examiner must inform the next of kin if any organ or body part is retained, upon the release of the body.

An Act Requiring National Background Checks (*Chapter 234 of the Acts of 2014*) requires all employees, volunteers, and contract vendors who work directly with clients served by the Department of Developmental Services to have finger-print background checks completed in both the state and federal criminal history databases. Boston is home to nearly 35,000 residents who have a cognitive or developmental disability and may have difficulty recognizing or responding to abuse. Mayor Walsh was the original lead sponsor of this legislation, which protects this vulnerable population.

An Act Relative to the Filing Deadline for Residential Exemption, Personal Exemption, and Tax Deferrals in the City of Boston (*Chapter 115 of the Acts of 2014*) allows the City's Assessing Department to make April 1st the tax exemption deadline every year. Currently, the deadline is a moving target based on the mailing date of the tax bill, which causes unnecessary confusion for Boston residents.

An Act Relative to a Boston Strong License Plate (*Chapter 78 of the Acts of 2014*) creates a specialty license plate with the words "Boston Strong" to memorialize the tragic events that occurred at the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013. Funds generated from the plate fee will be directed to the One Fund Boston, Inc.

Capital Bond Bills

In certain legislative sessions, the Governor and Massachusetts Legislature debate and finalize Capital Bond Bills, which authorize the financing of future capital investments in various areas of government. The last series of bond bills were finalized in 2008 to meet the capital needs up until now. Governor Patrick recently signed the following 2014 Capital Bond Bills into law:

An Act financing improvements to the Commonwealth's transportation system (*Chapter 79 of the Acts of 2014*) includes:

- **\$25 M** for transportation improvements in the South Boston waterfront.
- Requirement that MassDOT train 300 individuals through a **Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program**, modeled after the Mayor's Building Pathways program that focuses on low-income and minority applicants.
- **\$5 M** to expand two City of Boston pilot programs to (1) install sensors in street parking spots that notify drivers via an app when a spot is open and (2) allow for Time-to-Destination technology and digital signage that offers alternative routes
- **\$4.2 M** for construction at 11 priority intersections in 5 Boston neighborhoods to improve signaling and fund restructuring to bring these areas into ADA compliance.
- Creation of an **Active Streets certification program** to provide grants to municipalities who design roads for active users including pedestrians and cyclists.

An Act providing for the preservation and improvement of land, parks and clean energy in the Commonwealth (*Chapter 286 of the Acts of 2014*) includes:

- **\$10 M** for grants via the Climate Change Adaptation Infrastructure Investment Fund.
- **\$10 M** for Regional Comprehensive Climate Change Adaptation Management Plans.
- **\$8 M** to promote urban agriculture and **\$2 M** to support greenhouses, community kitchens, farmers markets, and food trucks in low and moderate income communities.
- **\$1 M** for the renovation of Parkman Plaza (Boston Common).
- **\$100 K** for improvements to Franklin Park pathways and entrances.
- **\$50 K** for the development of a master plan for Harambee Park in Mattapan.
- Creation of a **Massachusetts Food Trust** to increase access to healthy food options.
- Transfer of **Narrow Gauge Extension** in East Boston to Massport with added protections to ensure that the land remains permanent green space open to the public.

An Act providing for capital facility repairs and improvements for the Commonwealth (*Chapter 237 of the Acts of 2014*) includes \$150 M for capital projects for public libraries, \$90 M for the repair, renovation or construction of municipal facilities, \$50 M for the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, and \$10 M for municipal public safety facilities and equipment.

An Act financing information technology equipment and related projects (*Chapter 257 of the Acts of 2014*) includes \$38 M for a matching grant program to assist public school districts in improving student instruction and assessment through the use of information technology.

State Budgets

A strong partnership between state and local government is vital to the success of every city and town in Massachusetts to achieve our shared goals of providing a quality education for all of our children, promoting economic growth and development, ensuring public safety, and improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods. In FY13, the City of Boston generated nearly 20 percent of all state tax revenue, but received only 1 percent back in net state aid. While state aid has been steadily declining, it remains the City of Boston's second largest source of revenue and represents 15 percent of the City's FY15 budget. Mayor Walsh successfully advocated for essential state funds via the FY15 budget and FY14 supplemental budgets.

An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2015 (*Chapter 165 of the Acts of 2014*):

- **\$379.6 M in local aid** for the City of Boston via Unrestricted General Government Aid and Chapter 70 Education Aid. This is an increase of \$6.1 M or 2.8% over FY14.
- **\$2.5 M** for the **Boston Public Library**, an increase of \$150,000 over last year.
- **\$2 M** for the **Boston Fire Department** for its Training Academy and Hazmat Unit to prepare for large-scale emergency situations.
- **\$300,000** to keep the **JobNet One-Stop Career Center** in Chinatown open and allow it to continue providing important career and unemployment services.
- Increased general appropriations over FY14 levels for **Shannon Grants (\$8.25 M)**, **YouthWorks (\$10.2 M)**, and **Safe and Successful Youth (\$4.6 M)**, which will mean more summer jobs for our youth and more targeted outreach to prevent at-risk kids from gang involvement.
- Inclusion of language to promote the **certification of alcohol and drug free housing**.
- **Reestablishment of the Foundation Budget Review Commission** to study how the state is funding school districts across the Commonwealth.
- **\$12 M** for the **MA Cultural Council**, a nearly \$4 M increase over FY14.
- **\$1 M** for **climate change preparedness**.
- Important funding increases for domestic violence prevention and shelter, substance abuse services, adult mental health services, Councils on Aging, and more.

FY14 Supplemental Budgets (*Chapters 52, 70, and 119 of the Acts of 2014*):

- **\$20 M** for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- **\$10.3 M** for Boston (\$27.6 M statewide) to fully fund the state's commitment to reimburse cities and towns for a portion of our charter school tuition costs.
- **\$4.8 M** for the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative to provide wrap-around services for youth who are likely to be victims of or perpetrators of gun violence.
- **\$1 M** for YouthWorks to support summer jobs programs statewide.
- **Increased the Line of Duty Death Benefit** for public safety employees from \$100,000 to \$150,000 in order to support the families of Boston Fire Fighter Michael Kennedy and Lieutenant Edward Walsh, who died in the Beacon Street fire on March 26, 2014.